

EPA REGION VIII - INSPECTION REPORT**Rico Mine**

DATE: June 23, 1998

PERSONNEL PRESENT: Melanie Pallman, EPA - NPDES Technical Enforcement Program
Darcy O'Connor, EPA - NPDES Technical Enforcement Program
Stan Foster, Rico Properties

SCOPE:

This report summarizes an inspection of the Rico mine's St. Louis tunnel mine water treatment plant and the Blaine tunnel located approximately one mile north of Rico, CO.

BACKGROUND:

Rico Properties purchased the land upon which the St. Louis tunnel is located from Rico Development Corporation (RDC) on November 14, 1994. There is a dispute among the three entities (Rico Properties, Rico Renaissance, and Rico Development Corporations) over who actually owns the portions of land containing environmental liability (i.e., the St. Louis tunnel, the wastewater treatment facility, the settling ponds and the NPDES permit).

The Blaine tunnel is owned by Rico Development Corporation (Wayne Webster). Mr. Webster admits that he owns the Blaine tunnel. Flow from the Blaine tunnel is directed into the St. Louis tunnel mine water treatment plant.

The St. Louis tunnel mine water treatment plant is not currently in operation. Some time in 1996, after RDC realized it had sold the St. Louis tunnel and the St. Louis tunnel treatment plant to Rico Properties, RDC ceased operating the mine water treatment plant and submitting DMRs under the NPDES permit. The last DMR received by EPA was received for the August 1 - August 31, 1996 time period.

On September 4, 1996, RDC sent a letter to CDPHE stating that it no longer owned the property and requesting that the NPDES permit be transferred to Rico Properties. The Colorado Water Quality Control Division of the Colorado Department of Health and Environment ("CDPHE") sent a letter on August 21, 1997 requesting written documentation from RP and RR to determine ownership and responsibility of the facilities under Colorado Wastewater Discharge Permit #CO-0029793. Prior to this date, the State had sent numerous Notice of Violations and Cease and Desist Orders to RDC, the apparent owner of the mine and actual holder of the permit.

ponds had eroded to the point that water was flowing over the dikes. Mr. Foster stated that he was not sure whether or not the ponds were lined when they were constructed. The ponds are located adjacent to the Dolores River (see photo).

Inspectors observed artesian wells flowing into some of the settling ponds. These wells were apparently drilled for mining exploration. The water flowing into the ponds from some of these wells is geothermal (inspectors measured the temperature in the hot tub and it was 39.8° C). According to Mr. Foster, local residents of Rico have installed a hot tub and piped the water from one of the ponds into the hot tub (see photo). At the time of the inspection, the hot tub was in use by a family camping at near outfall 002 as designated in the former NPDES permit.

A discharge was observed from outfall 002 as designated in the former NPDES permit. Samples were collected from this discharge. The sample results are summarized in the table following this narrative.

The inspectors wanted to see the intake for the town of Rico's drinking water supply. Mr. Foster drove the inspectors to this location since a four-wheel drive vehicle was required to access this site. Inspectors observed the drinking water intake pond. The water treatment plant operator was at the drinking water intake pond. Inspectors observed large amounts of solids floating in the pond. The operator stated he was currently experiencing problems with the system and that he was back flushing to the river.

Mr. Foster showed the inspectors where the Blaine tunnel was located and then departed. (Inspectors had obtained verbal permission to inspect the Blaine tunnel site from Mr. Wayne Webster). Inspectors observed a discharge from the Blaine tunnel that was visually estimated to be approximately 10 gallons per minute. Samples were collected from the Blaine tunnel discharge. The sample results are summarized in the table following this narrative.

Inspectors left the Blaine tunnel site at approximately 5:30 p.m.

**Rico Mine Sample Results
St. Louis Tunnel - Outfall 002**

Parameter	Method EPA method - STD method	Permit Discharge Limitations	Sample Results	Blank Results
pH	Field Test by Inspector	6.5-9.0 Daily Max	7.20	n/a
Temp.	Field Test by Inspector	n/a	19.4°C	n/a
Total Recoverable Metals				
Cadmium	200.7 - 3120 B	0.0004 mg/l (30-Day Avg)	.0168 mg/l	.0113 mg/l
Copper	200.7 - 3120 B	0.024 mg/l (30-Day Avg)	.0163 mg/l	not detected
Lead	239.2 - 3113 B	0.0099 mg/l (30-Day Avg)	.0151 mg/l *	.0213 mg/l *
Silver	272.2 - 3113 B	0.0001 mg/l (30-Day Avg)	.00112 mg/l	not detected
Zinc	200.7 - 3120 B	0.237 mg/l (30-Day Avg)	1.850 mg/l	not detected

* Lead results are questionable due to possible lab error

**Rico Mine Sample Results
Blaine Tunnel - Outfall 001**

Parameter	Method EPA method - STD method	Permit Discharge Limitations	Sample Results
pH	Field Test by Inspector	no discharge	2.23
Temp.	Field Test by Inspector	no discharge	7.4°C
Total Recoverable Metals			
Cadmium	200.7 - 3120 B	no discharge	1.4901 mg/l
Copper	200.7 - 3120 B	no discharge	27.400 mg/l
Lead	239.2 - 3113 B	no discharge	.0573 mg/l
Silver	272.2 - 3113 B	no discharge	.00132 mg/l
Zinc	200.7 - 3120 B	no discharge	176.000 mg/l